



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913

PH (517) 373.7350 | FAX (517) 373.9228

www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/patterson/

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Contact: Christopher Kelley
517-373-0051

Legislation will protect your cell-phone records from con artists
Patterson bill unanimously passes Senate

LANSING—Could someone use your private cell-phone records against you? Just a few personal facts about you can allow someone to pose as you and obtain your phone records by fraud. Phone-service providers try to keep these records confidential, but they can be tricked by clever con artists.

State Sen. Bruce Patterson, 7th District, chairman of the Senate Technology & Energy Committee, introduced Senate Bill 1202 to outlaw such deception. The consumer-protection bill unanimously passed the Senate today.

“On the Internet today, you can easily find several outfits claiming to provide this personal information; it is time to act,” said Patterson, who was the first Michigan legislator to call for such a law, back in January.

Operations claiming to offer private cell-phone records do not appear affiliated with any major cellular telephone or VOIP (voice over Internet protocol) service providers. Reports suggest that in some cases, telephone company insiders secretly sold customers’ phone-call lists to online brokers, despite strict telephone-company rules against such deals. Sites offering these services sell this information for about \$90.

“This appears to be a growing problem around the country,” said Patterson. “I am pleased that I received bipartisan support as soon as my bill was offered. Everyone understands the urgency of the situation. This bodes well for swift passage in the House, too.”

Sgt. Scott Hilden, of the Canton Township Police, conducts public seminars on avoiding identity theft. He is pleased with Patterson’s bill.

“Identity theft is an enormous problem for law enforcement,” Hilden said. “I am completely in favor of a law to protect people’s personal information and records. Anyone who fraudulently attempts to obtain any personal records, including cell phone records, should have severe consequences under the law.”

Patterson has previously guided legislation to combat spyware and SPAM through the Senate Technology & Energy Committee.

“Citizens have been rightly concerned about identity theft, so the Michigan Legislature acted to provide some protection to consumers,” said Patterson. “This is the next logical step. People value their privacy. They should not be robbed of it by the unscrupulous. Identity theft can occur in many ways, and I will work to stop it in every way I can.”

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